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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000232

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER AND AF/E

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT YUSUF'S CONCERN OVER RIYALE'S U.S. VISIT

Classified By: SPECIAL ENVOY JOHN M. YATES

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abullahi Yusuf dispatched an envoy from London to express his strong concern to Ambassador Ranneberger and Special Envoy Yates over the visit of Somaliland President Riyale to Washington. Yusuf considers the visit's timing to have been especially detrimental since it coincided almost precisely with the launching of Prime Minister Nur Hussein's new government and, he says, it also sent to Somalilanders the wrong signal that it was okay to have attacked Puntland. The President's message to the AU Summit will be used in part to remind member states of UN Resolutions reaffirming the Security Council respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) President Yusuf's Chief of Staff, Mohamed Abdirizak, telephoned Special Envoy from London (where he was accompanying the President during his medical consultations) week of January 14 to say Yusuf had directed him to travel to Nairobi to deliver a message to Ambassador Ranneberger and Special Envoy. Abdirizak arrived January 21 and, understanding Ambassador Ranneberger's preoccupation with the ongoing Kenyan political crisis, met with SE. After giving a little of the background color around Riyale's and Yusuf's travel from Addis to London in the same first class cabin, Abdirizak said that the TFG President is extremely concerned about the implications of the Riyale trip and especially its timing. Precisely coinciding with when Yusuf and Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein launched their new lean government with reinforced policies to deliver services to the Somali people as well as to reassure the international partners of their commitment to the transition timetable, Riyale gets invited to Washington. Moreover, there was already general confusion about USG policy following the December visit by Defense Secretary Gates to Djibouti, which the international media reported to be indicative of a change in USG Somalia policy in favor of the Hargeysa regime.

¶3. (C) To make matters worse, Abdirizak cited Yusuf as saying since the visit also occurred while Somaliland armed forces were attacking Puntland, it therefore seemed as if we were sending the message that the USG condoned such action. Of course, as a Puntlander himself and an-ex President, Yusuf was more than irate at what he termed aggression from the Hargeysa regime.

¶4. (C) Special Envoy, who had given courtesy briefing on Riyale visit to the President's and PM's offices several days earlier and long prior to knowing the subject of the Yusuf demarche via Abdirizak, repeated the substance of Press Briefing guidance that there is no change in USG policy, no intention of recognizing Somaliland, and continued strong

support for the TFG. Abdirizak said he had received the same assurances during his own January meetings with AF and had also conveyed them to President Yusuf. The President was not pacified and, according to Abdirizak, he has become pre-occupied with the implications of the attention given to Somaliland, still an integral part of Somalia as acknowledged by the UN Security Council and AU. Special Envoy cautioned against obsessing over Somaliland status now with the need to focus on the mammoth tasks to be accomplished under the Transitional Federal Charter by 2009. Abdirizak did not disagree personally, but said he was delivering a message from President Yusuf, not one of his own.

¶5. (C/NF) Abdirizak went on to say in confidence that he has been instructed to draft remarks from President Yusuf to the AU Summit reasserting strongly the unity of Somalia and warning of the consequences to Africa if a move to recognize Somaliland as an independent entity gathers momentum. The implication was clearly that the visit to Washington with high level meetings, trumpeted by the Hargeysa regime as an "official" or even State visit could be interpreted as a change in our own intents. Special Envoy again went over points that the Riyale visit was a long-standing commitment, that it was not the first time a Somaliland Chief Executive had been received in Washington, and most assuredly that we would not be ahead of the AU in recognition of an independent entity. Again SE counsel was to concentrate on the transition and not get deflected by Somaliland's status.

¶6. (C/NF) COMMENT: No one will be surprised that the Somalilanders' visit inevitably raises questions about USG and international policy; even more so when amplified by the UK stopover and meetings en route. No one will be surprised that the Somalilanders will take every advantage to hype the

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visit and amplify their claims to independence. In the circumstance we may want to consider from our side a higher profile statement of support for TFG efforts; particularly, acknowledgment of the apparent good start Prime Minister Nur Hussein, with President Yusuf's strong backing and the virtual unanimous endorsement of the Parliament. We will also want to consider carefully the ramifications of any actions in coming weeks that would seem to reinforce suspicions of a shift away from the policies we have been pursuing over previous months.

¶7. (C) COMMENT CONT: With regard to President Yusuf's health, it seems clear that he is in better shape than suspected when he traveled to London for the second round of medicals. We do know he is out of the hospital although still having medical consultations while staying in a hotel in London. Photos of him around London and a couple of televised press interviews as well as our own conversation with him by telephone from London last week portray him as significantly recovered. According to Abdirizak, the final decision on Yusuf's return to Africa has not yet been taken. He seems intent on returning via Addis for the AU Summit, but some of his advisers believe he should avoid the high altitude stress and let the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister deliver his message. The decisions will be taken within the next couple of days.
RANNEBERGER